
ISD-CBO Update

October 30, 2001

Following the monthly national meeting held between Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and the Immigration Services Division (ISD) in Washington, D.C., ISD presents notes from the meeting that capture what was said and what questions were asked. While the notes are not intended to be verbatim, they do represent the topics covered.

Immigration Services' Business and Information Technology Strategic Plans

Bill Yates, Deputy Executive Associate Commissioner, began the meeting an hour earlier than usual with an update on the Immigration Services Program's Business and Information Technology Strategic Plans.

Mr. Yates said that the purpose in preparing these plans is to help INS manage the Immigration Services program more effectively and efficiently. Mr. Yates emphasized that this plan will require monumental changes in the way Immigration Services currently does business. The Plan begins this year and will continue through the next 10. Not only will the plan help us achieve our vision, it will require Immigration Services to institutionalize the ability to do strategic planning. Mr. Yates commented that INS needs to develop a more customer-centric approach—one that includes the following characteristics:

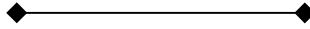
- promotes better communication with customers,
- notifies customers proactively of benefits for which they may be eligible,
- provides customers with additional channels and access to information, including ability to schedule interviews and access case status information via the web and the National Customer Service Center, and
- establishes an environment where customers visit an INS office only for interviews or when face-to-face interaction is required.

A member of the group asked how the improvements called for in the business plan will be funded. Mr. Yates responded that INS would use some of the money collected as part of the premium processing fee for technological improvements. Congress must authorize the INS to use the funds, but the money is in the Examination Fee Account.

Immigration Services is reviewing draft charters that would create a project management structure to facilitate the implementation of the strategic plan. The structure will cover 10 areas of implementation and include one or more Federal Advisory Committees. The ISD will invite CBO representatives to join one of the committees so they can provide input into the business plan implementation process.

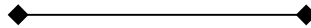
Staffing

The ISD is hiring 1,000 term staff members to work at the Service Centers in support of the Service's backlog reduction initiative and 900 term staff for the District Offices. Additionally, ISD has gained 400 permanent positions that will be deployed in the near future to address current and projected workloads. The ISD will allocate these positions according to calculations which consider the workload and staffing data collected over the past two years, as well as projections for two years. The ISD will review these staff allocations every six months and adjust them according to changes in workload.



Reducing Backlogs of Pending Applications

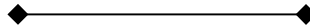
The backlogs of Naturalization cases are gone in most offices with the exception of a few very old cases. However, the Service-wide Inventory Program (SWIP) has identified these cases so that every effort can be made to see that they are completed as soon as possible. Though the ISD has reduced processing times for adjustment of status cases, and is completing twice the number of cases it has in previous years, the pending level has not been comparatively reduced due to the influx of LIFE and late legalization cases. During FY 2002, ISD expects to adjudicate more cases than ever before.



LIFE Act

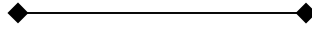
The Associate Commissioner for Field Services Operations reported that INS has received more than 80,000 cases related to the LIFE Act (i.e., V, K, and Legalization). Of the 80,000, amnesty cases make up approximately 10,500. As expected, the numbers continue to grow weekly. In Los Angeles, the first interviews related to these cases were conducted on October 22. Interview training is being conducted in Arlington, Chicago, Miami, Houston and Dallas and interviews will take place in those offices soon. All training will be completed by the end of December.

For more information on this topic, please see the [LIFE Act page](#) on [INS Online](#).



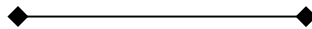
Indochinese Adjustment Rule

A representative from the Office of Adjudications reported to the group that the rule is under review by DOJ and EOIR.



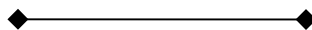
Designated Physicians

A representative from the Office of Adjudications responded to a question about cost differences in physicians' services on either side of the border with Mexico. The cost differences are the result of jurisdictional differences and currency exchange rates. Physicians outside the U.S. (panel physicians) are designated by the Department of State and sign a contract defining the terms of the designation and setting limits on fees. Physicians in the U.S. (civil surgeons) are designated by INS District Directors and are not required to sign a contract under current regulations. In addition, INS regulations provide that the civil surgeon must reach an understanding with the District Director with respect to the fees charged. Thus, CBO representatives were encouraged to resolve any concerns about the fees charged by civil surgeons through the District Director.



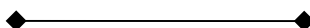
Service-wide Inventory Program (SWIP)

The SWIP program manager briefed the group on the progress of SWIP 2001. SWIP satisfies two requirements: it determines how many applications are pending and the financial value of the applications. The SWIP system was built from scratch and was very labor intensive during its first year (FY 2000). However, even in FY 2000, the INS did not sacrifice its production goals to conduct SWIP. By partnering with the Office of Records Services and the Production Management Branch, SWIP will become a "perpetual inventory system". Adjudication and other file processing activities can be conducted alongside SWIP and processing no longer comes to a halt during the SWIP file freeze. Local officers have the discretion to move an exceptional case and the time when the file freeze was in effect was halved from last year to this year. Among the significant improvements realized in and for the FY 2001 applications inventory is the standardization of file labeling and location codes, making it much easier for offices to find "lost files" and to cut down on the time lost needed to do file searches required by NQP4.



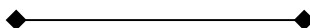
Fee Increase

The INS received 467 comments on the fee increase, compared to more than 2,000 for the last increase. With very minor changes, the final rule will be published in November and the fees will be in place by January 2002 or shortly thereafter. The fee for fingerprints will be \$50.



Examinations Fee Account

The INS continuously reviews its fee account deposits during the year to ensure that it is not overspending. A biannual fee study allows INS to adjust fees to cover the actual cost of application processing. When Congress redirects money from the Fee Account to pay for another program, it takes ISD two or three years to recover those costs.



Naturalization Testing

The Acting Branch Chief for Business Process Reengineering announced that the INS awarded the citizenship testing contract to K. W. Tunnell at the end of September. Representatives from K.W. Tunnell will be invited to the next CBO meeting to answer questions.

